GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3092
ANSWERED ON:20.12.2004
CLONING OF ASIATIC CHEETAHS
Paraste Shri Dalpat Singh

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Asiatic Cheetahs facing extinction are all set to be cloned;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Scientists from Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology are awaiting clearance for a visit to Iran to finalise modalities of fetching a pair of Asiatic Cheetahs;

(d) if so, by when permission is to be granted to them; and

(e) the further plan of the Government for cloning of the same?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a), (b) & (c) A proposal to resurrect the Indian Cheetah by cloning has been prepared by the Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology,(CCMB) Hyderabad. The main aim of this proposal is to acquire genetic material from the Asiatic Cheetahs, which are now only found in small numbers in Iran and by way of cloning, produce live cheetahs, which can be at a later stage rehabilitated in the natural habitats in the country. However, before concretising the proposal the Ministry of Environment & Forests has constituted a team of experts comprising of the Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, a scientist from CCMB, a scientist from Wildlife Institute of India and the zoo superintendent of Ahmedabad Zoo to visit Iran and initiate a dialogue with their Iranian counterparts as well as study the present habitats of the Asiatic Cheetah in that country.

(d) The Ministry of External Affairs has been asked to request the Indian Embassy at Tehran to chalk out a suitable programme for the proposed visit of the team.

(e) At present, the major emphasis will be to protect and preserve the Asiatic Cheetah in its existing habitat in Iran. CCMB can provide the necessary technical guidance in the field of biotechnological intervention like artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization etc. as complementing tools for conservation of the species in Iran. Once the population of the Cheetah reaches a viable number, few animals can then be brought to India for further breeding of the species and possible reintroduction in wild. The Ministry of Environment & Forests is not presently in favour of the idea of resurrection of the species by cloning.